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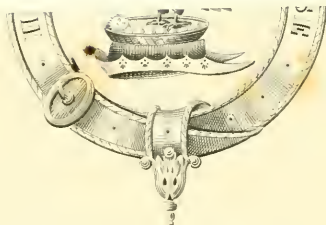


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The Chief of St. Athans;

ſc. ſc.



THE
CHIEF OF ST. ATHANS;

AND

Words to Welsh Melodies;

WITH

OTHER POEMS.

BY WILLIAM HALL.

London:

PRINTED FOR W. SIMPKIN AND R. MARSHALL,
STATIONERS'-HALL COURT.

1822.

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The Chief of St. Athans.

CANTO I.

AND proud St. Athans' gates were barr'd,
The spearmen stalk'd no more the yard,
The donjon lay without a guard—

The standard staff was bare :

Glave helm and targe had lost their rust,
The plumes no longer weigh'd with dust,
No more was heard the revel's burst—

Sweeping the valley fair.

Dim'd was the blaze of evening mirth,

No harp was at the door ;

No lightsome lay of love went forth,

And nought of minstrel lore :

Leader and bard, knight squire and page,

All mingled in the battle's rage,

On Radnor's gloomy plain :
Full silent was the vacant hall,
The spears were taken from the wall,
The coursers spurn'd the idle stall—
 To share the fight again.
Of all that armour's dread array,
That erst along the galleries lay,
 But one lone helm remain'd—
Of minstrel pride that late would soar,
When Chieftains join'd in festive roar,
Or gentle dames light skim'd the floor ;—
 One harp—still unprofan'd
By stranger hands—alone was there :
That helm and harp were reliques rare,
 To bless St Athans' dame ;
The lyre her son's young fingers span'd—
The helm was his whose gallant brand
 Was early wreath'd by Fame ;
Was his—whose sigh of ardour fann'd
 Love's sparklings into flame.
Slow won a spring of chasten'd pride,
Slow swept a summer's joyless tide,
And stern a winter void of cheer
Hath sped: and yet still rolls the tear,

As o'er the casque and lyre she sighs,
And memory pictures former joys:
Still in her chamber sad and lorn,
Impervious to the ray of morn,

 The lady sits and weeps—
Like diamond in its earthy shroud,
Or star of eve veil'd with a cloud,
Or violet 'neath the fern leaf bow'd—

 The glistening tearlet creeps.
Say not, vain sceptic! in thy pride
The fair and falsehood are allied;
Each blush of loveliness declares
That truth and modesty are theirs;
And the lone sigh of absence tells
Refin'd the glow of passion swells;
Yet in the widow's sainted tear

 Fidelity! thy rays unfold,
So full of heaven—so stainless—clear—
As was the stream to Israel dear,

 That met the patriarch of old;
When with his wand he struck the rock
To calm his unconfiding flock.

And victory! vain thy pomp and glare
To calm the widow'd soul's despair—
Thy glow can never enter there;

And stern the pang that strikes the breast,
When foes the wreath of honour wrest—
When death can but redeem the shame
That stains a vanquished hero's name—
What 'vails it, if his single glove
Is seen the first—the best to wave;
If skill to lead and heart to dare—
And manliness, a foe to spare:
If all, or good, or great, or brave
Are claim'd—sad tributes to the grave;
But if one throb of solace swell,
To soothe the sound of warrior's knell—
It is to think such hero fell,
Ere fate and fortune's adverse tide
Had swept away his battle pride.

That throb of joy the lady own'd,
For many a pang its bliss atton'd;
Her love a warrior's heart had blest
Through years that peaceful fled;
Her lips a warrior's cheek had press'd—
Her hand had clasp'd his silken vest—
When he to battle sped.
And when he seiz'd the trembling spear,
Who mark'd the tracing of a tear?

None—for she joy'd to see
Her lord amid his vassals brave,
And know their leader lov'd to save—
Each arm of strength would freely wave,
Or perish manfully.

To view the offspring of their love
Bright in the ruddy phalanx move;
And mark the plume nod proudly o'er
That youthful brow she sooth'd before.
But when around the mountain's side
She saw the gleaming column glide,
The glancing of the banner wide,

Wend round the crag top high—
'Tis not for common souls to know
That hallow'd tenderness of woe—

A mother's sympathy,

Through all the mazy paths of life—
That thorny wild of care and strife—
Say what may calm man's woe-worn breast—
What yield the sad sojourner rest?
In days of toil his moments glide—
Now crush'd by power—now spurn'd by pride—
Now fill'd by hope—his soul elate
Flings rude the gage and scoffs at fate;

Or wandering lonely through the gloom,
Wends groveling onward to the tomb.
By hope betray'd—and friendship flown,
With health and peace and glory gone:
By pain subdued—by passion weak—
Is man on earth for bliss to seek?
So full of doubt and dread and woe,
So poison'd is the streamlet's flow,
That pluck the lilly leaf of joy ;
'Tis vain, its sweets so quickly cloy,
And dark remorse and keen distress,
Its fragrance turns to bitterness.

Yet there is given the soul to cheer
One ray amid the shadow drear ;
One glow of light when withering care
Would scathe life's summer blossoms fair :
'Tis woman's smile—her vows of truth—
The artless witchery of her youth ;
Her angel voice, whose accents veer,
The holiest echo round us here ;
Her heart's devotion to her love,
'Tis these that man's rude ills remove.
Scorn him whose harsh and impious tongue
Dares her soft winning wile to wrong ;

Darts calumny, derision foul,
On all her confidence of soul;
Boasting the dire and hateful skill,
To lure the fair to deed of ill;
Win her first stainless—bright caress,
To leave her—sorrow and distress:
Then mock the fall'n with villain sneer,
And triumph in her burning tear.

But the chieftain sought the foe—and fell!

Yet ere his last blow sway'd,
He mark'd the battle's varying swell,
Saw the proud steed with vacant selle
Rush down the trampled glade.

Oh! many an one of high degree
Sank in that tide of chivalry,

Beneath an adverse blade;
It was a day of doubtful fight,

And many a stubborn eye
That in the conflict met delight,

And glorying watch'd the deeds of might
Faded in agony.

Then back the gleaming ranks retir'd,
And flush'd with loss of comrades fir'd,

Dark—deep revenge each swore;

Upshot the flight of arrows dread,
And flash of spear and target red,
And blood was o'er the sabres spread:

But Rhydderch's rose no more!
Still onward bore his gallant train,
But courage—hardihood was vain,
Upon the pennon gleam'd a stain,
'Twas their brave leader's gore;
Fleet flew the word of dark dismay,
And all the glory of the fray
Swam like the streamlet's mist away,
Beneath the rude wind's pow'r,

But he who bore the banner bright
Yet linger'd on the field of fight ;

What gust of joy was his to share !
When covering 'neath the pennon's fold,
That gallant heart he deem'd was cold,

He met his eyes weak glare—
And saw the red'ning streak advance,
And felt the rising pulses dance,
And mark'd, though wild, again the glance,
Greeting the silken flare.

“ Oh Madoc!—gallant heart—art thou

“ All lonely left to guard my brow?

“ Thine aid methinks is timeless now :

“ Yet bear me to yon hillock’s side,
“ And ere I quit this scene of woe,
“ Tell me how sank our warrior glow—
“ How fell my spearmen’s pride.
“ Then watch my last expiring sigh,
“ And soothe me in mine agony.”

“ Still there is hope!” and at the word

His eye with rapture lit again,
All hurried beat his heart—he heard
The calming of his pain.

So swiftly mounts the falcon dark,
On high the quarry weak to mark,
And floats with wavy wing;

So chafes the proud and panting steed—
So bounds the greyhound o’er the mead,
With light and ardent spring;

When from her sheltering form with speed,
The hare glides thro’ the ring.

Thus eager for the victor’s meed,

The warrior’s breast will bound,
Tho’ thousands at his bidding bleed:
As ready he for gory deed

As falconet or hound,
“ There still is hope—thy followers brave
“ Fill not all unreveng’d the grave;

“ An after day from fate may wrest
“ The solace of thine anger'd breast—
“ And Fame to deck thy falchion give,
“ The wreath of battle—Chieftain live.”

Still faint, the blood-stain'd grass he press'd,
And slowly throb'd his pained breast,
And still unsteady swam his eye
With much of inward misery.

'Twas not his fame and glory low—

'Twas not the scar that seam'd his brow—

That woke the dread and frenzied flame,

But He from whose dark hand it came;

He mark'd how fell the sabre's course—

He mark'd how stern its ruthless force,

And shudder'd at the thought:—the brand

Was wielded by a brother's hand,

Amid his woe—amid his pain,

His pray'r was death—but fleet again

That hope had fled—the angry strife

And vengeance, won him back to life.

As softly flows the silver tide

On ocean's broad and shelving side,

 In summer's calmer day—

Stealing o'er rock and weed and flower,

With gentle but resistless power,

Rolls to the highmost bay:
Its expanse spreading to the eye,
To mock it with its majesty;
So came the flood of life at last,
When the deep faintest pangs were past,

And rushing to his height:
Then might be seen how flash'd his eye,
How rose he o'er his apathy,

And clasp'd his sabre bright;
And smil'd, and said, "Ere yet I die
"Thou'lt win revenge and victory."

"Saw ye my boy, good Madoc? say
"If still he mounts above the fray:

"Say, did he bear him brave?
"Mark'd you his lance his path divide,
"His falchion in the red gore dyed,
"Or fell he o'er his grave;

"That hallow'd grave by warriors won,
"When the dark hour of havoc run,
"And the soul flits like twilight dun,

"Winging from the wave."——
"Mourn ye him not, my gallant chief."——
"Oh Madoc! oft the tender leaf
"On the elm branch hath spring tide brief—

“When swells the nipping blast—
“Ere half its wonted fibres fill’d
“Is all its early blossom chill’d:
 “Its first glow beams its last.
“So sinks the youth of tender might,
“’Mid the wild current of the fight:
 “His dreams of fame are past.”

 “Not such his fate!” the ancient cry’d,
“His shimmering glave is proudly swaying;
 “Could’st thou but view him boldly ride,
“His battle plume still wide displaying,
“Thou would’st him bless. By heav’n he falls!
 “His foes unnumber’d round him meet;
“Still waves his hand—a sign—he calls—
 “He must not that repeat:
“Spare me my chief! thy weary head
“Recline on yonder mossy bed;
 “To Conan’s aid I fly.
“Spare me my chief! I may not shun
“His aid ere yet the life stream run.”——
“Haste Madoc! shield my gallant son,
 “’The ag’d and weak may die.”—

Then rush'd the ancient from his lord,
And grasp'd in his rough hand the sword;

No gentle wight was he—

No soldier of a lady mood—

His pastime war—his joy was blood—

And foeman's agony.

Fast clave he thro' the mailed throng,

Disdainful of the brave—the strong,

Nor stoop'd beneath the glowing fight;

But stern in heart—and stern in eye,

He flung the banner proud on high,

And rush'd amid the foe with cry

Of vengeance and affright.

Full late was he for needful aid,

The glittering fragments of a blade

Around were strown—he mark'd them well,

And deem'd the gallant boy

Had 'neath the stunning death blow fell;

Then did his anger mad'ning swell,

And eager to destroy.

Reck'd not his safety in the fight,

But nobly strove in death's despite;

And though a single brand

Long kept his rugged foes at bay,

And joy'd in the unequal fray,

Till sudden sank his hand;
A lance hath search'd his tameless breast,
A tint hath stain'd his flowing vest,
His death couch is the sand.

Now had the victors time to pant,
Their comrades brave their foemen scant,
And Conan first their fetters felt;
Then came the gibe and scoff and jeer,
And harsh restraint and thralldom drear;
Abas'd amid his foes he dwelt.
But oft his agonized mind
Flew to the scenes he left behind;
When wanton hope again would smile,
To cheer the murky prison pile,
But vain and wavering was her wile;
The bondage of his ardent hand—
The memory of his fallen band—
The bearing of his pennon down—
The harshness of his victor's frown,
Would rouse his sufferings should they sleep,
And bid the venom rankle deep:
With heart to feel how stern his woes,
With arm that lov'd the feud, the strife,
With eye to mark how watch'd his foes,
With soul that soar'd in combat rife;

'Twas marvel—if without a moan,
He pac'd the darksome cell alone;
And strove not—dar'd not win his way,
Again to Rhonda's streamlets gay;
Marvel—if sank he 'neath the smart,
With such a hand and such a heart.

Turn we the tale to him who lay,
Lone victim of the sanguine fray;—
Brave Rhydderch; in thy day of might,

Thy tide of grandeur—great of name!

Ah! little deem'd thou such a night
Should shroud around thy fame.

Scant was such thought when rose the morn,
That ere its light from earth was borne,
Thy battle banner should be torne—

Thy helm of pride be riven:

That host and chief alike should fail,
And the dread blow which could prevail,
Should be by brother driven.

And fast the darkness rolled on,
Yet came not bannerman or son,

To soothe him in that hour of dread;

He, that at morn a host could lead,
Might not command a single steed,
A single arm to aid his need,

When his day of brightness fled.
Oh! fate of battle! such thy pow'r,
To dim the warrior's splendid hour.

What bard may tell the veteran's woe,
When he heard the night trump sounded?
For a moment his spirit caught the glow—

A moment his bosom bounded:
His ardent hopes—now soaring high,
Now drooping into agony,
Waver'd with every fitful blast
Of the horn that on the breezes brast,
Till tired and faint, his watchful ear,
No sound could greet to his feeling dear;
Over his head did the tall pine wave;
Beneath its shadow he wish'd his grave;
The earth that bore him he long'd could be,
The goal of his mortality.

Around him he saw the envied lot,

Of foemen dark and vassals brave;
“And is there,” said he—“no earthly spot,
“Where the fall of Rhydderch may be forgot,
“And the stain on his name can enter not;

“Where oblivion's shade may save.
“Yet heaven! I thank thee for this hour,
“When stript of all my pageant pow'r,

Ambition's meed I see;
Still guard me—Arbiter of Fate!
Or quench a brother's glow of hate,
Or mine anxiety;
And I will bless thee at the tide,
When hope and anger—all are void.

Then came a night of pain—but when
The morning flung its beam agen,
And glinted on each ghastly trunk,
And bloodless limb that lay;
Lone Rhydderch's brow and courage sunk
With horror and dismay.
O'er the friend of his youth the warrior wept,
For his comrades in arms the still tear crept;
That gem—proud worlding!—couldst't thou view,
To valour as to friendship true;
Son of pleasure! thy dreams would fade,
And the taunt of thy tongue be mute,
When thou saw'st the chief of the ruddy blade,
Whom the ranks of battle had oft obey'd,
Weep o'er the fall'n as they press'd the glade,
The pang of his soul acute.
Now dauntless brave, now soft as the maid,
His spirit had fled—its fire was allay'd—
Like the falling of the lute;

When it melting droops from the strain of pride,
And the meeker numbers of piety glide.

Faint from the field of fight he pac'd,
His glory gone—his name debas'd,
With mien of woe—with heart of grief—
Void of all hope or wish'd relief;
Without or son or friend or page,
To cheer him on his pilgrimage:
A hostless warrior—wanderer now—
With none to aid his crestless brow,
Sad Rhydderch stept—"Where shall my head
At eve recline?"—the Chieftian said,
"Wan with my toil my feeble feet,
"Will fail me ere I succour meet;
"Where may I turn, nor fear to ask
"My place at board or festal flask;
"Where hope to meet the friend with will,
"To cheer the fallen warrior still.

"St Athans! in thy gates I've seen,
 "Full many a goodly sight;
"When knights who stept with gallant mien,
 "And dames of beauty bright,
"And all Glamorgan's pride and power,
"Sat circled in thy festive bower.

“ Yet ’mid the fair and noble throng,
“ That pac’d my halls of mirth along,
“ Breathes there still one with heart to dare,
“ My shelter from the midnight air?
“ St. Athans! oft thine eyes were clos’d
 “ With joy—and joy be thine for aye,
“ The proud who ’neath thy roofs repos’d,
 “ The martial and the gay,
“ Will revel thro’ the banquet high,
“ Again with glowing minstrelsy,
“ While nought is left thine ancient lord,
“ But honour and his sword.

“ And ne’er within thy courts again
“ Thoul’t list the echoes of his train;
“ A scath’d and scatter’d band are they,
“ Like leaves that fade upon the lea;
“ Whilst I bear on the gazers’ view
“ The wither’d oak from which they flew,
“ My glow of pride hath wan’d—at last
“ I mark my pomp and honour past,
“ And hast’ning from the traitor’s wile,
“ To where the cell or sainted aisle,
“ And holy fane and shrine of peace
“ May bid my toil and sorrow cease;

“ There shield mine head and shroud mine eye,
“ And give to heaven the tribute sigh
“ That tells a mortal’s piety.”

Thus sat his fame.—Oh! there’s an hour
When life is cheerless—glory vain,
When he, who once begirt with pow’r,
Meets its bright blazon with disdain;
Marks its approach with eye of care,
With fearfulness and keen regret,
For the soul lingers to forget
Its bliss, ere burst ambition’s flare;
Then in that tide he deems him bless’d,
If fate the luring wile may rest.—
Such calm the Chieftain’s breast did own,
When the light gleam of morning shone;
And happy in his withering pride
He felt the glow of peace to glide;
And caught the lightning of its ray,
As might and honour shrank away.

The Chief of St. Athans.

CANTO II.

Two summer tides had slowly flown,
And still round Conan's drooping head
No gentle ray of hope was thrown—
No beam of freedom shed.
In the stern donjon's darksome pile,
His spirit long had ceas'd to smile—
Anon he heard the shout of war,
The clanging hoof and helmet jar—
Anon he heard the high command
Of leaders to their vassal band:
Or on his ear oft fleeting came
The noise of followers of the game.
Deem not that all unnotic'd there,
It came and fled without of care;

That unregarded pass'd the din
Of war without, and feasts within—
Yet 'twas not pleasure's golden beam
That o'er him threw its fickle gleam;
It glanc'd that poison'd pang that burns,
That tells of joy which ne'er returns,
That whispers hopes which fleetly die,
The bliss, the bane of memory.

Oft lives upon the soldier's brow
Intemp'rate anger's ruddy glow,
And ardent comrades joy to see
His reckless intrepidity.
Oft lives within the soldier's breast
That blissful light by angels bless'd—
Sweet pity's holier flame—and then
He wins the love of fellow men.
And such was he—of that mild mood,
Who cent'nel o'er the captive stood;
Nought of the spearman air he bore,
Save in his garb and 'mid the roar
Of battle;—then if honour's wrcath
Hung on the paly lance of death,
He'd rush that fateful gaud to press—
That o'er his heart was tenderness.

“ And is that chief in donjon barr’d,”
Said he, “ and am I doom’d to guard
“ That gallant youth, whose venturous hand
“ Threw terror ’mid our steeled band?
“ With warrior pride his sabre sway’d,
“ And caitiffs ’fore him sank dismay’d :
“ He sought the bravest—and his eye
“ Peer’d anxiously for victory.
“ He fell, the bravest!—and his fate
“ The direst that on warriors wait.
“ It were not guilt such breast to cheer,
“ And soothe his soul ’mid sorrow drear.”

“ Chieftain ! I watch’d thee in the strife,
“ Unquell’d wert thou when havoc rife
 “ Bore down thy gallant train;
“ In fight I’d joy to see thee low—
“ In peace I mourn to mark thy woe,
 “ Thy thralldom, and thy chain.
“ I honour in thy sterner hand
“ The might and skill to wield the brand;
 “ And if a foeman he,
“ Who brav’d me in the field of fight,
“ Where all out-number’d sank his might,
 “ ’Tis joy to see him free.

“ Fetters ill suit a warrior’s arm—

“ A donjon hath of little charm

“ To greet a soldier’s eye,

“ Whose bounding bosom fear ne’er chills—

“ Whose ardent soul for glory thrills,

“ And for the mastery.

“ Oh! ne’er may such undaunted heart

“ Sink ’neath the vile and venom’d smart

“ Of dark captivity.

“ Then let an humble spearman’s aid

“ Throw light amid thy fortune’s shade,

“ ’Twill soothe him ere he die—

“ To say he calm’d a warrior’s brow,

“ When fate had dash’d his freedom low.”

Like one whose weary days have pass’d,

Where yet a sun-beam ne’er was cast—

Deep delving in the lowly mine,

His lot to labour and repine,

Till wayward fate at length restores

His footsteps to his native shores.

Weeps he with joy again to hold

His maiden with her tress of gold,

And throwing forth his eager eye,

Meets rapture or in earth or sky;

Dwells with delight on cheeks that glow
With hallow'd fire—love's sainted lowe!
Or flings his ken o'er wood and wave,
And deems him rescued from a grave—
And such the bliss to Conan given,
As met his glance the glint of heaven—
And such his joy as in his ear
The witchful wild harp's thrillings veer,
Streaming from out some lone recess,
Woke by a hand of loveliness;
For at that calm and blissful hour,
Kilgerran's soft and maiden flower
Had sought her peaceful bower.

Wanton the proud laburnam threw
In spring's light day its golden hue;
The lilac bent its purple head,
And violets sweet and daisies red,
And king-cups quaffing chrystal dew;
The rose and bending bells of blue
Flung all their fragraney around,
To bless that spot of sainted ground.
There oft at eve from all retir'd,
When the light lyre her soul inspir'd,

She sat and sung her artless themes
Of guileless love and virgin dreams:
Fair Teivy rippled 'neath her ken,
Then wound and shelter'd in the glen
The dove perched on the poplar bough,
Threw forth her plaint in cadence low—
Or plumed her wings and fann'd with speed
Her course above the spangled mead.
Oft from her lovely bower she view'd
The eagle veer o'er hill top rude—
The red deer bound—the light lark soar—
The timid fawn skip wild before;
Or watch'd she on the wavy swell,
The fishers frailer coracle—
Then to her harp again she turn'd
And all of wordliness was spurn'd.

With more of awe ne'er pilgrim fell—

Before the shrine he toil'd to see,
Where all his hopes of heaven dwell

The guerdon of his piety;
Than Conan felt, when on his sight
The fair rob'd maiden glanced bright;
She threw the glistening harp between,
In sooth it was a fitting screen—

Perchance 'twould shield but could not hide
The charms that shone Kilgerran's pride;
So graceful hung her round fair arm
Across the strings—a fairy form
So peerless did her figure shine
With airiness and light divine,
That while the moon-beam faintly play'd,
She seem'd the fay nymph of the shade;
But with the stranger came unrest,
Since first his foot that shade had press'd;
Though modest glow'd his cheek and mien,
And gentle air and warrior sheen,
Unbid that eye had dar'd to lour
Within the stillness of her bower—
And scath'd and bade her visions cease
Of virgin playfulness and peace.

His helm was doff'd—his yielding knee

In supplicative mood was bent—

“ A pardon grant, thou fair ladye,

“ Mine was no rude intent;

“ I heard the floating numbers wend,

“ To heaven the heavenly notes ascend,

“ But yet one mortal ear they fill'd,

“ His bosom with them thrill'd;

“ It was not wrong to seek the shade,
“ From whence such bright incentive stray’d ;
“ Nor rude to greet the lovely hand
“ That could so skill’d the chords command :
“ The fabled syrens on their strand
“ Have lured the seamen rough to land ;
“ Evil their aim ! light peace is thine—
“ Then lady be thy pardon mine.”

Though his the stern and warrior form,
His heart the tender flame could warm ;
Tho’ his the dark and falcon eye,
A maid could bid its fierceness fly ;
Though rude his soul in warfare sprung,
Yet beauty o’er it gently flung
Its softer spell—and warp’d its aim .
From conquest to a milder claim.
Oft on his casque the war crest brav’d,
As oft the braid as proudly wav’d ;
Oft sway’d his arm the deed to do,
As oft it sav’d from rapine too,
A chieftain bright in battle hour,
A courtier in a maiden’s bower :
One while to wake the trumpet’s blast—
One while his hand o’er lyre was cast ;

He gloried in the conflict's toil,
But sweet to him was beauty's smile—
Both joy'd him, be it field or hall,
The fight, or sparkling festival.

So gentle seem'd the stranger's air,
Where awe was mingling with despair ;
Her pity she could not remove,
And pity is akin to love.

The pardon came—and meek demand,
“ Why roam'd he o'er her father's land? ”
His hapless tale—he soothely said,
“ Yon donjon walls enclose my bed ;
“ A captive knight—no more my crest
“ May cheer the gallant warrior's breast—
“ A chieftain fall'n!—no more my hand
“ May lead to war my spearman band :
“ A prisoner in yon lonely tower,
“ A moment from thy father's power
 “ I breathe the fresh'ning blast !
“ Oh say not Maid ! that here my feet
“ Unwelcome press thy lone retreat,
 “ This liberty my last ;
“ But grant that oft thy gentle strain
“ May cheer my prison—still my pain.”

Upon the loose spray blooms the flow'r,
And wantons in the summer show'r,
And forth its fragrance freely throws,
That all may love the wilding rose ;
Spring marks its buds—encircled there
In covert sleeps each beauty rare,
'Till the warm sun hath bid expand
Its fair leaves for a maiden's hand.
So pity is the velvet bud,
That passions tints hath 'gan to rud,
Till rays of rapture float above,
And then it ripens into love.
A wandering flower perchance 'twill bloom,
 Its thorn may wound and bid to smart ;
But oh ! it blazons through the gloom,
 That crowds around the heart—
So winning is the subtle lure,
We deem its beam so bright and pure.

“ Yes, I can feel for pris'ner lorn,
“ From native shades and streamlets torn—
“ But say, how 'scap'd thou from thy cell,
“ And pass'd the rude brow'd sentinel ?
“ 'Twas danger !”—then she blush'd—for why ?
Night hid the blush from Conan's eye

Within her soul—her speech betray'd
What deep impressions pity made ;
And then 'twas silence for a space,
And then she droop'd her glowing face ;
Unthought her fingers gently ran
Among the chords they lov'd to span ;
A faint and warbling note there rose,
Till sweetly sank the dying close—
“ What said I?—No, I meant to say,
“ That chieftain here you may not stay ;
“ But when the lingering eve is come,
“ And the winged beetle wakes its hum,
“ Then if thy prison opes for thee,
“ The grove may shade thy liberty.
“ 'Twere hard to stay such slight relief,
“ To bind thy bosom to thy grief—
“ To shun a captive's dark distress,
“ Unpitying were—were merciless.”

So spake the gentle maid—her tone
Love might not hesitate to own ;
But that he bids such accents veer
More cautious to a votary's ear ;
Conceals each wild and wanton tress
Neath the thin veil of tenderness ;

And artful hides his cunning smile,
Till mutual bosoms bless the wile.

I ween full oft he seized the boon,
 So sweetly and so frankly given,
To pace beneath the glist'ning moon,
 And breath the enrapturing breath of heaven.
I ween full oft that captive eye
Threw glance of keen anxiety,
As slow day's planet glided by,
And through his prison grate—its dart
Cast on the dial of his heart,
Till came the hour, the spearman wight
Releas'd him from the cell's dim night,
To roam the bower without controul,
The load star hope to cheer his soul.

Thus time and thrall were sweeping o'er,
When round Kilgerran's hilly shore
 The battle blast was blown ;
And Picton in its massy walls,
And Pembroke through her glittering halls
 Hath heard the stirring tone.

Colwyn! of lengthy javelin bright,
Calls round his vassal men of fight,
His form in iron armour dight,

 He bears him to the field;
Crowd round his banner, Pembroke gloves!
His gleaming sabre upward waves,
 His arm is in his shield;

And Conan heard the silver note,
Nor vain for him its echoes float,

 Nor vain the toil and jar:
He hails the bugle's shrilly note,

 That summons to the war.

(And Jestyn join'd stern Colwyn's band,
Combin'd their pictur'd ensigns fann'd,)

Not vain for sorrowing Conan still,
Did Colwyn quit his castled hill;

 For in that absent tide

Grim walls were pass'd—dark portals riven—

And sturdy bolts aback were driven,

And freedom hath her blessings given,

 And slavery shrank aside.

He roams now o'er the beetling verge,

Where the wild billows onward urge,

With aim well mark'd—his lov'd delight
To stay the veering sea bird's flight:
Or paceth o'er the shrubby wold,
To watch the dogwolf to his hold,
And there with javelin deftly thrown,
He'd face the savage—and alone
In fisher's guise he oft was seen
To linger, where the sea breeze keen
Dash'd up on high the bounding spray,
Where the light coracle would lay;
If ceas'd it for a gentle tide,
He gave his hand the skiff to guide,
And threw the meshy toils along
The terror of the finny throng.

'Twas sweet 'mid morning's glow to see
His lightsome bark dance flauntingly,
 Upon the wanton foam;
Or basking on the placid tide,
That laves Kilgerrans's steepy side,
Oft there would Una gently glide
 On that light wave to roam,
And give and court the tender smile
That love can purify from guile;

'Twas dear employ—and meet requite,
A task that did her soul delight,
To fledge his weapons for the chace;
His cap with varied plume to grace;
The fragrant wreath around to throw,
To deck his warrior fronted brow,
Or banish all his dreams of care,
With carol wild or artless air.
Oh! deem it not a vain delay,
When caution-danger—pass'd away,
Could chain him to that tower and grove—
Say, was it honour?—was it love?

A tear he mark'd in Una's eye,
And noted oft her bursting sigh,
And sorrow's tints so palely fly
Across her maiden cheek.

“Why droops my pride?” he fondly said,

“Hath fame our passion pure betray'd?

“Or is my Una's soul afraid,

“'Tis falsehood's words I speak?

“Oh! never may I lure to guile—

“Never with deed and wish as vile

“As hell's own arts invent,

“Scathe maiden peace—scathe virgin pride—

“ Or dash the blush of joy aside,

“ Then leave her to repent :

“ Go! mark the raven—mark the deer,

“ Nor hope, enjoyment, pain, or fear

“ May scare him from his mate.

“ Is man less votary of truth,

“ When in the spirit of his youth

“ And all its fire elate,

“ He woos one heart his love to bless;

“ He swears her sorrows to redress,

“ And shield her yielding tenderness?

“ Shall Conan then the brightness dim

“ Of gem whose brilliance lights on him

“ Crush the fair beam to manhood given,

“ And smile to see its radiance riven?”

“ Oh Conan! ’tis no idle fear

“ That wakes my full and artless tear;

“ But love destroy’d—and gladness rent

“ In haught ambition’s fierce ascent,

“ May claim my sorrow; Conan! know,

“ For thee alone may wake my woe,

“ Oh! ne’er can thought that wrongs thee, rise—

“ To cloud thy vision from my eyes.

“ Jestyn, thy kinsman and thy bane,
“ Who slew thy sire—gave thee the chain,
“ And rules thy vassals ’neath his reign,
“ Hath urg’d his suit—my parent bows,
“ And bids me honour Jestyn’s vows;
“ Fly, fly thou must!—thy prison ne’er
“ May hide from thee the morning’s glare;
“ The fetter rude—the stubborn chain
“ Must ne’er enclose thy limbs again.
“ Again awake thy bugle’s tone,
“ Thy sword, thy spirit still thine own,
“ And meet the battle—thine the cause,
“ Round thee their glaves each follower draws,
“ And Una will not shun thy fate,
“ Though death should end the stern debate.
“ With less of wariness and care
 “ The watchful plover wings around,
“ When near, her nurstling brood you scare
 “ Treading upon her nesting ground;
“ Rising, she skims ’tween earth and sky,
“ Then closely darts before thine eye,
“ As if to lure thee from the shade,
“ Where all her unfledg’d hope are laid;
“ So scans my eye—so list mine ear,
“ When danger stalks in secret near;

“ If treachery leaves his loathsome den,
“ I come thy shielding seraph then.”

He went—oft in monastic shade
His plumeless helm and staff were laid ;
At morn, a monk of sainted look,
Enwrapt in cowl—intent on book :
At noon, perchance with minstrel lyre,
He rov'd, while soar'd the answering wire,
To note of mirth or poet's dream—
Or heaven's animating theme :
At eve, he doff'd that cloke—and then
Stept forth in fishers guise agen ;
But darkling sheen he ill could bear,
A warrior's spirit centred there,
And oft he curs'd time's lingering tide
That crush'd his hardiment and pride.

Yet ere he left that fairy grove
One softer hour was given to love—
Mild came the eve, and gently round,
Whisper'd the breeze's sylvan sound :
Calm drew the veil of darkness o'er
Kilgerran's towers and mountain hoar ;

And the still'd eagle's pinions fell—
Nor doom'd the raven through the dell;
Light flow'd the wave with rippling weak,
As timid the repose to break,
While far the wandering peasant's plaint
Alone, stole on the silence faint,
A song of freedom and content,
The glow of rustic merriment;
It mock'd the heart where strife and care
Sat sullen, every joy to scare;
It mock'd the breast ambition swell'd,
Nor lightly was the feeling quell'd;—
The chieftain in his lordly hall
Might scorn its rude and artless fall—
The monk within his gloomy cell
Might marvel why such sweet notes fell;—
But warrior heart and bigot ear
Were fram'd not for its accents clear,
Give one the cowl his leer to hide—
Give one the glave through blood to glide—
Give this the legend, lore, and cheat—
Give that all! all! but dire defeat—
'Tis still ambition's dread employ;
To them what 'vails the song of joy,

The strain that wafts around to bless
The peasant's hour of happiness?
Ask of that wight in shrouded stole,
What gain'd he by the ceaseless roll
Of seasons spent in cloisters dim,
With heartless pray'r and listless hymn,
'Mid penance dark—'mid scenes of woe—
Where sank the convert's happier glow—
Where the light foot of youth is fetter'd,
And the smile of age shrinks back embitter'd;
Where hand—where heart—where lip and eye
Are tutor'd as in piety.
Ask—did his bosom realize
The phantom gaud that mock'd his eyes—
Unsated hope that scath'd life's bloom,
And won the ascetic to the gloom.
Seek of yon slave to pomp and pride,
 If e'er amid the battle's clang
He reckless saw his mates that died,
 And met their bier without a pang;
If beam'd not vain his target's glare,
To ward the shaft of stern despair—
If wept he not when crimson'd o'er
He saw his banner stain'd with gore—

And heard the unwelcome heralds tell
How comrades, friends, and followers fell;
List their response—then marvel not
That peasant peace forsakes their lot.

So pilgrim on wild Asia's sands,
Throws forth to heaven his grateful hands,
When o'er the arid deserts break
The fancied wave and seeming lake;
And far the illusive rays appear
To tantalize the heart they cheer—
He sees the bright reflection set
Of village mosque and minaret,
Then speeds his fainting feet to gain
The water's brink and breeze in vain;
The minaret behind he leaves,
Yet still he marks the witching waves—
Still rolls the cheating semblance there,
He deems its coolness floats in air—
False mirror to his aching eyes—
He toils—he pants—still thirsts and dies!
So lift, so fail ambition's spells,
Till truth in death, the dream dispels.

O'er Una's feature's sweetly came
Love's purest light—the glowing flame.
The tear of sorrow gently shone,
Sincerity claim'd it her own ;
The sigh unwitting softly fell,
But love had woke its secret swell,
And all of truth and fondness there
Outshone the clouds of fear and care ;
Like wave whereon the summer sun
 Its golden ray may beam,
O'er sands and shoals the brook may run,
 Yet lillies deck the stream ;
The sun still smiles upon the rill—
Bright bursts the lave—'tis chrystal still.

“ Behold this banner when it waves,
“ Though countless legions mingle graves—
“ Though the hot war-feud rageth strong,
“ And havoc leads the ranks along—
“ Show but the pennon, and each arm
“ Will sink as if by witchful charm.
“ My father's spearmen all have sworn,
“ Whether by friend or foemen borne,
“ Whene'er its pictur'd fold is given,
“ O'er lighter banners to be driven,

“ Their glaves in scabbards shall be slung,
“ Their shields upon their backs be flung,
“ The charge in midway ire be stay’d,
“ And Una’s wish by all obey’d;—
“ Then take my gift—high o’er the tide
“ Of battle shall it proudly ride,
“ As safe amid the strife and glare—
“ As does the bark* emblazon’d there
“ Seem to glide o’er the waters fair;
“ The form within that bark reclin’d,
“ Shall pourtray Una to thy mind;†
“ Then boldly on, and sway the brand
“ With dauntless heart and stayless hand.”—

For Conan was the pennon wove,
The charm of battle as of love.

“ Oh, Una! in the strife I seek,
“ The arm of treachery is weak—
“ And long the streamer proud shall fly
“ Blest type of thy fidelity.”

False fools are they, who dare maintain
That love is but a fading dream—
That all its words and vows are vain—
Its light a momentary gleam,

* The ancient banner of Pembroke.

† A maid guiding a boat in a quiet bay.

That darts and dies.—False fools are they—

For love is like yon planet's flame,
Constant it beams on man, for aye

The first in heaven, yet still the same;
And should an hour of dread arise,

To teach our souls the pang of woe,
Mark ye yon wonder of the skies,

Bright through the show'r its beauties glow :
So love will give its beam to bless
The heart 'mid clouds of bitterness;
Then trust not those who deem it ill,
Falsehood is theirs and folly still !

Far roam'd the chief, and many an eye

Of former friends were sparkling bright,
Whene'er their halls he wended nigh,

Though garb'd in low and humble plight.
Few shunn'd the chief—each youthful arm
Felt ready for the conflict warm—
And secret joy and still'd embrace
Told yet how honor'd was his race.

“ Our graves, our ranks of war are thine,

“ Conan, whene'er thy lance may shine:

“ Glamorgan's knights are trusty still,

“ And prompt to do their leader's will.

“ We mourn’d thy lot—we deem’d thee dead—
“ And all thy race of greatness fled,
“ We lov’d thee living—and our swords
“ Have prov’d what dar’d we for our lords:
“ We knew thy wrongs—and hearts are ours
“ Again to win thy native bowers,
“ If Conan’s arm directs the fight
“ ’Gainst the rude miscreant, for his right.”

Thus far adventured on the sea of rhyme,
Fragile my bark—my hand unskill’d to guide
Where rolls the flow of poesy sublime,
In all its wonder—all its swell of pride.
Be mine amid the ripple safe to guide,
There bend my prow—there lift my lonely
sail,
Light wantoning on the chaste and sunny tide;
And oh! if smiles propitiously the gale,
Success attends the helm—grant thus may
speed my tale.

The Chief of St. Athans.

CANTO III.

PROUD Cardiff's towers are gleaming bright,
And Cardiff's groves are fill'd with the fair;
Loosely flows the stream of delight,
'Twas revelry, mirth, and wassail there—
'Twas Jestyn's gladsome bridal night,
And the maidens stept in sheen of white.
Where strides the baron at the lonely hour?—
Why seeks he so late the dark'ned bower?
He goes to answer a summon of dread,
Penn'd by fingers long deem'd dead :
He enters the bower unarm'd and alone,
And starts at the sound of an old man's groan;
His blood is curdled—his veins ran cold—
But what could he fear from a man so old.

Mystery sat in the stranger's look,
A glance that treachery ne'er could brook,
Though feeble he seem'd;—when he told of wrong,
Again would his better arm be strong—
Instinctive 'twould drop as if to feel
Its comrade in war—the flickering steel;
But his brow was wan, and his locks were grey,
And his tottering limbs told life's decay—
Cheerless and chill, save the glance of his eye,
When he spake of a chief that fell,
The baron would rather have learn'd to die,
And his moan be the battle yell—
Than know the pang that conscience sent,
When the old man's look on his face was bent.

He seem'd no hermit spent with pray'r
With penitence and scanty fare—
He seem'd no pilgrim, worn with toil,
Journeying from some distant aisle—
Nor the coif clad monk from Elwy's shrine,
Wandering to preach the lore divine—
He look'd the warrior—age alone
Could tame when the fire of youth was flown;
Though weak, still graceful his step as he pac'd,
And his war belt still was round his waist—

And 'mid the furrows that cross'd his brow,
A scar was seen in ghastly show,
And when that scar caught the baron's ken,
Who may tell his feelings then?

“ Why do the lamps shed through the bowers,
“ A ray so bright and full?

“ Remember, proud chief! of yon grey towers,
“ Time shall not often wing the hours,

“ Or dew-pearls gem at morn the flowers;
“ Ere yon red lamps are dull.

“ Why doth the minstrel's song of joy
“ Float wayward o'er the vale?

“ Those heralds of mirth may yet employ
“ Their strings to sound thy wail;

“ And the cups of gold that mantle o'er,
“ With the ruddy foam of the wine;

“ Those goblets rich shall sink in gore,
“ And the lips they press'd so oft before

“ Shall thirst, and in death recline.

“ Remember, dark chief! remember the field,
“ When the voice of conflict soar'd—

“ When the ranks of the ravager learn'd to yield,
“ And red was thy kinsman's sword:

- “ Did not treachery hurl the lurid glove
“ That rung on the casque of Rhydderch the
 brave!
“ When he sank on the field 'neath thy vengeful
 aim,
“ When sat, but unsullied, the star of his fame;
“ And the son of his love to the foe was given,
“ And the wreath he had won from his grasp was
 riven?—
“ Proud baron! remember the deed was thine own,
“ And deem that dread heav'n calls thee to atone.
“ Think not of thy bridal—look not on the maid,
“ But think of the chief thou in battle betray'd;
“ And know that each blood-drop that flow'd from
 his wound
“ Shall summon a hundred brave spearmen
 around:
“ And believe that a flame hath been lit at his
 shrine,
“ That shall ne'er be extinct till his fate has been
 thine.
“ In thy pride thou may'st revel—in thy wrath
 thou may'st rule,
“ But the pangs of thy conscience thou never
 canst school;

- “ Still rove in the chace, and still seek in the hall,
“ A bliss that can ne’er on thy dark bosom fall :
“ Thou may’st toy with the fair—in the goblet
may drown,
“ For a moment, thy sorrows—but, oh! are they
flown?
“ Range fleet through the valley, or bend to the
hill,
“ Thy terrors, thy feelings, shall range with thee
still ;
“ In the hall, in the bower, in the chace, o’er the
wine,
“ There is nought can bid conscience her arrows
resign ;
“ And roam round the fair earth, you meet not
the balm,
“ That can ever restore the lost soul to its calm—
“ ’Fore thine eye flitteth still the red glance of the
glave,
“ As it fell on the helmet of Rhydderch the brave.”

The moon as it swam sent a wavering ray,
Lightly around did its flashes play,
Palely they glanced on the sable fold,
And ne’er had their glint met a breast so cold ;

He droop'd his brow, for the blushes of shame
Across his visage reddening came;
Or the pale tint of terror was hovering o'er,
Like the thin cloud skimming the mountain hoar,
Oh! not to rival that chieftain's power,
May the just or good e'er meet such hour:
Despairing he sank on the moss-clad stone,
 And when he dar'd to raise his eye,
No form he saw, and he heard no groan,
 But the blaze of his halls he could spy;
And now he must meet that lovely one,
 And join in the revelry.

And who is that maid of lovely mien
That blooms so bright 'mid the festal scene?
She steps with more than mortal air—
No aid she needs from diamonds rare,
That sparkle through her flowing hair;—
Brightly her cherub beauty beams,
The lustre of her dark eye streams,
As the lone star that gilds the even,
Gliding through the arch of heaven:
If aught of angel grace and mind
Was e'er to earthly shape consign'd,

Its essence dwelt within that breast,
So pure, so innocent, so fair,
As if a seraph linger'd there—

The loveliest and the best.
Her cheeks such vermil tints adorn,
As flitteth to a summer's morn;
And as her gentle bosom heaves,
Oh! hast thou seen the jass'mine leaves

And Erin's bright arbute—
The leaves strew 'neath the noontide glare,
Amid them place a berry rare,

Just ripen'd into fruit:
'Twill to thy fervent fancy tell
How bright those hidden beauties swell;
Hers was that witchery of eye
That glanc'd forth love and sympathy—
That clouded at the tale of woe,
Or shone to meet joy's vivid glow.
But ah! not round did joy's bright wreath
Of flow'rets fling their honey'd breath,
Nor twine with her tress of auburn hue—
For the chill breeze came and the blossoms flew,
And the gems were dim'd—their brightness fled,
Their lustre all destroy'd and dead;

And she for whom the banquet rare
Pac'd with the saddest bosom there,

If swam she 'mid the mazy dance
Light as a fay-nymph would advance—
And youthful eyes enraptur'd trace
Her witching symmetry and grace;
If her round arm swept o'er the lyre,
With all a maiden minstrel's fire—
Or join'd she in the choral song
That peal'd the echoing roofs along;
Yet deem not that one soul-felt ray
Impell'd her bosom to be gay;
'Twas forced her cheerfulness—'twas art—
The tear might tell how swell'd her heart—
How sweet its source—how pure it came,
Conan and love alone may name.

The bridal lay, the minstrelsy
Woke with impassion'd energy;
The harps of Cymri rang aloud,
With graceful air and cadence proud:
'Twas joy—that floated wild around—
'Twas joy—that gave the magic sound—

'Twas joy—that woke the inspiring chord,
And in its brightest numbers soar'd:
High rose the strain—loud thrill'd the mirth—
And eyes of love glanc'd lightnings forth;
Bright swam the cups—and glad the laugh—
The joyance, and the friendly quaff—
When sudden hush'd the minstrels lyres—
Sudden their fingers fled the wires;
Or mute amid the strings reclin'd,
As if had fled their raptur'd mind,
What check'd the flowing strain of pride?

What stay'd the master's ranging hand?—
Dark Jestyn dash'd his plume aside,
And grasp'd his battle brand.

The Chieftain's breasts were bounding wild,
To mark their mirth so sudden foil'd:
And Jestyn's brow is gathering still—
Again the note of clarion shrill
Hath sounded—why a close so dread?—
Why droops the baron's plumed head?
That rending note the recreant knew
He oft had heard it cheerly blew—
It call'd him to a brother's side,
When on the plain that brother died:

But by whose hand, and how he fell;
The baron's secret sorrows tell!

Stern Jéstyn thought him of the bower,
Of the vengeful threat, and the stranger's frow;
And twice on his tongue came the rallying word,
And thrice from its sheathe half sprung the sword,
Wavering to summon his knights around—
Or again bid the minstrel's strings to sound,
For he might not on his bridal day,
Bid a stranger helm away,
E'en though that stranger's mailed hand
Should wield at morn the battle brand.
But the knights have oped their glittering line,
And ranged the lovely maidens shine,
To bid a welcome to their guest,
And aid his revelry or rest.

Oh! what a manly port was seen,
In warrior garb and knightly sheen,
As stept the stranger in the hall,
Amid the gallant festival;
High wav'd his plume above his crest,
And bright the mail that hid his breast;

His casque of steel emboss'd with gold—
His silken vest that splendid roll'd—
His lengthy glove that downward hung
Shew'd his round arm with strength was strung;
And when he doff'd his morion bright,
And his firm brow reveal'd to sight,
His glist'ning eye and mien so rare
Won all the gaze of warrior's there:
And the bright smiles the maidens own,
Were on the stranger chieftain thrown.

There was a day—and if the fight
Encircled round the warrior-wight,
The flashing gloves would upward spring,
Light as the covey on the wing;
And they would fall his helm to save,
Flush as the samlet in the wave,
Dashing amid Dee's azure lave.
Rude seem'd his mien, and ruder still
Each wild emotion of his will;
When battle mark'd his wayward course—
What arm might stay his weapon's force?
And where the soul in conflict day
That wish'd the youthful chief away:

For e'en the foeman lov'd to see
In fight, the flower of chivalry!
Rude seem'd his mien—yet seeming all—
High rang his name in banquet hall;
There lain aside war's glittering guise,
The courtier's vest the mail supplies;
With lady phrase and aspect mild,
See him light pleasure's lightest child;
Now revelling through the mazy dance,
Now couching high the quivering lance,
Now quaffing all joy's cup could yield,
Now bounding to the tented field,
He knew the soldier's worth to prove—
Knew how to gain the soldier's love;
And in the battle none felt dread,
If Conan on the squadron led.

'Twas thus ere fell the villain brand,
And Rhydderch's blood had stain'd the sand;
His sire no more!—his cause betray'd—
His lands the tenure of the blade,
A fallen chief—his laurels strown—
His host, his pride, his glory gone;
A wild erratic life he led,
With all—but hope and honour—fled.

Twelve rolling months he wander'd o'er
Glamorgan's glens and mountains hoar ;
Awhile with heart of woe he pac'd,
Awhile care's murky scowl he chac'd,
For his the light and buoyant mind,
That cast its sorrows to the wind ;
A chordless harp he strung again,
And bade it swell, with varied strain ;
Whilom amid a noble throng,
He peal'd some note of rural song :
Or 'neath the blossoming bower's shade,
A lay of love, to love conveyed ;
Whilom the flowing hymn of praise,
With hermit eld he wont to raise :
Or thrilling bade his stanzas glide,
To tell the rending battle's pride.
Hope cheer'd him long—a tenderer claim
Centred round Una's rapturing name :
The witchery of his waking dream
And Una was the glowing theme.
“ Shall he who scathed my parent's pride—
“ Shall he by whom that parent died—
“ Shall he who seized my rightful hold,
“ Made foemen of my vassals bold,

“ Now snatch the hand that love hath given?—

“ Forbid—avenge it, earth and heaven!”

The recreant heard his name with dread,

No welcome wandered o'er his tongue;

The cup-boy fill'd no goblet red,

The glance of secret ire was flung.

“ Ah! little deem'd I in that day,”

(The sullen chief was heard to say)

“ When pride and honour swerv'd away,

“ In Cardiff's castled hall to see

“ Again my kindred enemy.

“ The sire my hand hath stricken down,

“ And yet my ken hath mark'd his frown;

“ I saw the son stretch'd on the plain!

“ Yet, if it be no fiend that scowls,

“ I meet his living look again,

“ Bright with the frenzy of his brain

“ His glaring eyeball rolls.

“ What 'vails my dark and daring deed—

“ What 'vails my red and ruthless hand—

“ What 'vails to bid a brother bleed,

“ If thus is swept the murderer's meed,

“ E'en midst his vassal band?

“ Weak heart is mine, if wavering still
“ I shrink, and not the deed fulfill:
“ Weak hand, if awed by chilling fear,
“ I strike not strong and deep and drear—
“ Rouse then my soul again to dare,
“ The well struck deer leaves not the lair.”

The minstrels' harps again have ceas'd,
 To the bridal all repair;
But where is the coif'd and cowl'd priest,
 And where the blooming fair?
She comes, and with her a man of eld,
 He whispers in her ear;
And when the baron that form beheld,
 Despite, he filled with fear.
'Twas the same aged man that sought the bower,
Who bade him think not on his bridal hour—
Who dared his villian deeds upbraid,
And spake of the chief in the field betray'd.
Timid behind the maiden stept,
And if with sorrow, her smiles had slept,
The joy that swam now in her light blue eye
Told all her soul's pure extacy.
Like the mountain at morn it dimly shows,
 And the misty clouds enveil its head;

But when the glad'ning noon ray glows,
And o'er its lichens spread ;
Knoll, ridge, and scaur, and heathery glen
Beam forth, with varying graces then :
But nought more wavering may you seek
Than the tints that crowd a maiden's cheek,
When sudden hope, and unlook'd joy,
May care disperse, and grief destroy.

Where rose dark Jestyn's sable crest
The stranger chieftain bowed ;
He spake not—but his ire repress'd
Told more than speech aloud.
The panting of his burning breast,
That calm'd not, sooth'd not into rest,
Rose like the waves by tempest driven,
When their force 'tween wind and rock is riven.
The flashings of his anger'd eye,
That bickering from their dark orbs fly,
Glanc'd at the recreant's shrinking head,
And all his manhood wan'd and fled.
Time was, and who might scathless dare
Before him such defiance wear?
But in that frown and in that eye
Such stern awakening terrors lie,

That bids the guilty soul retire,
And dread its just and vengeful ire.
Vice is a plant that hides its thorn,
A midnight flower that shuns the morn;
Woe to the hand that heedless weaves
Its bright, but fleetly fading leaves;
Pluck not the gaud, though fair its beam,
Folly its bloom—its seed, is shame!
It hides its thorn—but when the sun
Of virtue radiant overhangs—
Its colours fall—its beauty run—
Its deed of venom then begun,
You meet it in a thousand pangs.

And well that harrowed bosom knew
How fleet its luring witch'ries flew,
And not a pang it e'er possess'd,
But revelled in that guilty breast.
The frown that liv'd on Conan's brow
Hath bade him all its torments know;
The old man's stern and scowling eye
Hath woke the flame of agony;
And in his soul the fiend, Despair,
Hath roused him from his sleeping lair,

And urg'd his nerveless hand to clasp
The glave—'twas but a feeble grasp ;
It trembled with abortive ire,
Remorse had still'd the angry fire,
And quell'd the proud and daring glow
That hearts—whose throb is honour—know.

And not a knight who pac'd the hall,
But mark'd the baron's brow to fall,
Saw mantling there the fearful rush
Of shame—that bright but guilty blush ;
Or on the stranger's mien was bent
Each eye, as woke the wild intent ;
They mark'd the frown of hatred shown—
They mark'd the proud defiance thrown,
And at the baron's look aghast,
The wondering whispers onward past.—
“ We saw that youth in rude attire,
“ In old St. Dogmael's tune the lyre,
“ Singing, the lazy monks to please,
“ Some wizard theme to crown their ease ;
“ How may he beard the chieftain brave,
“ And wear the self-avenging glave ?
“ The seneschal hath wrongly told
“ His name—Red Conan of the hold !

“ A wilding boy;—’tis said he bore
“ A maid from out the plashing roar
“ Of waves, that wash Kilgerran’s shore;
“ But yet I ween the wily tale
“ Is fable all.—When did love fail
“ To whisper forth some playful theme,
“ To raise a youth in maid’s esteem?
“ And ne’er did wanton fame declare
“ Lord Colwyn’s daughter was the fair.
“ And who this man of eld? his weeds
“ Show that he oft hath told his beads;
“ In some dim aisle or lonely cell
“ His pious lay hath learned to swell.
“ What woo’d him from his living tomb,
“ To gain short respite from the gloom?
“ That wrinkled brow and fireless eye
“ Should grace the shrines of Llanthony;
“ Nor quit their dark and solemn shade,
“ To mingle in the bright parade:—
“ But list! the youngster claims the ear
“ Of him he might have learn’d to fear.

“ I tell thee Chief!—though high thy name—
“ Though wide of vassalage thy claim—
“ Favourite of fortune and of fame;

- “ As fleet the mountain vapours rush—
“ Fleet as leaps forth the fountain’s gush—
“ Sudden as barb from bow may spring,
“ So on thy shafts of sorrow wing.
“ Chieftain! I tell thee none hath dar’d
“ To meet the sword of judgment bar’d;
“ Scarce e’en the virtuous—ah! then how
“ May you withstand the unerring blow?
“ Believe, proud man! that never yet
“ Did Conan his deep wrongs forget;
“ And for a father’s life betray’d,
“ The claymore must appease his shade;
“ And thou hast mark’d the streaming blade
“ That Rhydderch in the battle sway’d,
 “ And wondering watch’d his ire;
“ I know the base betrayer’s blood
“ Still swims—and Conan in its flood
 “ Shall yet avenge his sire.
“ And for the maid of many charms,
“ Mark me—’tis Conan’s mailed arms
 “ Her gentle breast must shield;
“ When did the dove and vulture meet,
“ Or timid fawn the tiger greet,
 “ Or serpents mercy yield?

“ No sordid parent seal’d our vow ;
“ Cold as the mountain rift of snow
“ That wreathes their tops above ;
“ Pure as the morning’s blissful flame,
“ Her heart’s spontaneous wishes came,
“ And heaven hath nam’d it love !
“ Thus is she mine—that heart is brave
“ By force would win her from my side ;
“ In battle Conan stain’d his glove—
“ It oft was crimson dyed :
“ It flesh’d it for a foolish glove,
“ ’Tis doubly sure—the guerdon, Love !”

He said, and every envied charm
Was his, he clasp’d her angel form :—
“ Stir not a hand to stay my path—
“ He rues who wakes Red Conan’s wrath ;
“ Nor follow where the fair one flies,
“ To death he speeds whose footsteps rise.
“ To the porch, lov’d maid ! the coursers wait
“ To bear thee from the tyrant’s gate—
“ Fly—fleetly fly !”—one backward look
He gave, and all the baron shook ;
And wrapt in mute surprise and awe,
The Knights his daring purpose saw,

And admiration freely gave
To maid so fair and chief so brave.

“ Ride on! slack not at hill or steep,
“ Nor curb thy bounding coursers speed;
“ Ride on! and boldly stem the deep—
“ Nor check at scaur or mountain sweep,
“ Nor blench at hollow—dread at leap—
“ Thine is a gallant steed!
“ So should'st thou ride if battle roar'd,
“ And still within its sheath thy sword
“ Slept, while thy vassals bleed;
“ But safe, wend gently on thy way,
“ The maid may prize the tame delay,
“ As listening while thou vow'st thy fay;
“ Thee, to retard, no helm shall rear,
“ No arm shall poise the ruddy spear,
“ No glave shall rouse the maiden's fear;
“ Breathes not a knight who deemed thee, foe
“ In all proud Cardiff's halls;
“ That would not strive to ward the blow,
“ E'er o'er thy crest it falls;
“ Such gentle heart—such gallant hand,
“ Must always chivalry command.”

The Chief of St. Athans.

CANTO IV.

AND fast they rade, nor mount them stay'd,
Nor streamlet flowing silver bright—
Nor the forest shade—nor the fears of the maid,
Till they met the misty morning's light,
As fleet it swam o'er the heath-clad wold,
Tinting the hills with a gleam of gold;
Lonely St. Athans' towers lay,
Mingling their frown with the glance of day;
High rose they o'er the vapours around,
Like rocks by the wavy waters bound;
No banner flew from the turret proud—
No warder hail'd to the stranger loud—
'Twas lonely without and mute within,
And still'd was the clanging armours din;

With sullen front the walls did stand,
Like a cemetry on Egypt's sand,
Far flinging its shadow o'er the land;
And the silence seem'd death's stillness soft,
When the last faint hallowed sighings waft,
And the doors of the tomb for ever close,
To shroud a mortal's long repose,
When friendship's link and love's bright tie
Are severed, and eternally.

Awhile in their course they had gently ridden,
The panting steeds were mildly chidden:
“Knew you,” said the maid, “that form of age,
“With the flowing locks and aspect sage,
“That through the hall pac'd by my side?
“Intently my Conan's form he eyed——
“'Tis he! he cried—oh! bless my boy,
“Nor yet hath perish'd all my joy;
“He lives! and still in St. Athans' towers
“His widow'd mother whiles the hours.
“Fair maid! is thine the heart my son
“Hath softly woo'd and deftly won?
“If so, I bless thee—live to bless
“The soul that long hath known distress.

“ Pure is my Conan’s youthful breast—
“ Mild as the cushat in her nest;
“ But stout his arm—and a braver hand
“ Hath ne’er the bickering faulchion fann’d;
“ Long may it shelter—long may it shield
“ The maid that glad to his love shall yield.
“ Again the spring of hope is beaming
“ O’er the heart where sorrow long was gleaming,
“ Rude as the torrent from mountain streaming;
“ But the wave hath mingled its spray with the rill,
“ And glides through the vallies sheltered and still,
“ Till wide in the lowlands the waters spreading,
“ Smiles ’neath the ray the sun is shedding.
“ Childless, I deemed mine age was wending—
“ Mateless, my pray’rs to heaven ascending;
“ Yet not unreck’d they entered there,
“ They flew not the orisons of despair—
“ They were heard—in an hour, I meet with all
“ The bliss I long’d on my heart might fall.”

“ Nam’d he, say you, St. Athans’ towers?
“ Mark you their drowsy shadow lours;—
“ Breath’d he my reverend mother’s name,
“ And urg’d his own parental claim?

“ Oh, father! liv’st thou yet to throw
“ Courage and hope around my brow!
“ Short space the recreant lord s it o’er
“ Thy valiant vassalage of yore;
“ Speed we then on, while fate prepares
“ An outlet for my father’s cares.
“ There maiden! ’neath a mother’s smile,
“ I place thy secret shelter, while
“ I give, to fling thy banner high,
“ And mark my followers round it fly;
“ Safe ’neath yon roof the maid may rest,
“ Nor wile betray—nor foe molest;
“ There, in the halls where Conan sprung,
“ Where erst his boyhood’s target hung—
“ Where shone his opening day of pride,
“ And bliss swam bright on time’s swift tide;
“ Calmly may Una’s heart recline,
“ Till peace and love their wreaths entwine.”

A gleam of the sun came bursting o’er,
Brightening St. Athans’ turrets hoar,
Like the ray that gilds the brows of age,
When the sports of youth their minds engage;
One smile still hovers, as if to tell
How welcome to them was the stripling’s yell—
How full on their heart it fell.

The knight from off his courser sprung,
And he blew on the horn at the portal hung;
Years had flown since it last was blown—
Since its chief had fill'd its silver tone;
And the rook loud scream'd, and the wild dove
flew,
And the fleet hare frightened brush'd the dew,
And the lowing kine uprear'd her head,
Half springing from its rushy bed;
And the shrill cur leap'd on the cottage wall,
And the village kerns were listening all,
To hear the unwonted echo fall;
They remembered of old how blithe that blast
Came veering around when its note was brast.

As he pac'd the court—one look he gave,
Where high the flaunting wild flowers wave,
In mockery of the skill divine,
That gave the sculptured wreaths to twine;
O'er flowery scroll and scutcheon rare,
Grey moss and yellow gave their glare:
And time with slow but certain sway,
Had worn its crested pride away;
Yet peer'd it lordly o'er the soil,
And still unsullied—void of spoil;

And gallant shone, though sear'd by age,
Despite time's hand, and winter's rage,
As was its lord unshaken still—
Unbending 'neath bleak sorrow's will.
Vainly its spelful sceptre sway'd—
He scoff'd at rude misfortune's raid:
Noble in soul—though cold neglect,
Contumely vile, had robb'd respect.
Bleach'd with the breeze of care, he strode
Lone over nature's brambled road,
And smil'd upon his toil, and soar'd
Proudest when gales of terror roar'd;
Still holding heart of pride, that time
Unquench'd—a soul that knew not crime.

Bright was the morn, and the maiden bright
Unveil'd in her bridal garments dight,
Was lovely to see, and the flowery tress
Was shrinking before such loveliness;
Fair she stood in the morn beam light,
And the smile she own'd was a witching sprite;
No heart, though pent in the garb of steel,
But would melt into softness, and learn to feel.
They came to the hall where the harp was hung,
In sooth a tear in the chief's eye sprung:

'Twas his youthful joy, and the chords were bare,
Long since a finger had wanton'd there ;
And there was his father's morion old,
The plume was mouldering—heavy it roll'd,
When the cold gust swept through the lofty hall,
And glancing the harp bade its wild tones fall ;
And there was the cup that crown'd the feast,
When the foam high floated for the guest :
Cup of the chieftain ! the goblet rare ;
Many a ruby and emerald bare,
And the purple amethyst blazon'd there.
In the day of peace the gems were bright
As the glow-worm gliding through the night ;
But they sullied when sank their master's pride—
When his day of festal splendour died :
Nor cheer'd one heart with pledge or strain,
Till they smil'd to bless their lords again.

“ Harp of my youthful day ! thy strings

“ Long left to slumber, yet shall soar,

“ When through thy chords a maiden flings

“ The magic chimes of yore.

“ I fly thy charms—thy sounds would tell

“ Listless o'er thee I should not dwell,

“ A feebler hand must wake thy swell ;

“ But while there’s feat of strife to woo
“ I seize the morion of my sire,
“ And bid my bosom match his fire
“ That kindled bright when vengeful ire
“ Taught him the deed to do.
“ Oh! while there’s doubt uncertain, vain,
“ Be thine the weak and wavering strain—
“ The calming air—the soothing plaint—
“ Thy warbling soft—thy echo faint,
“ Fitful as summer’s bickering gale,
“ That slowly fills the sluggish sail;
“ But when the deed is done, and when
“ I breathe the chief of fight agen—
“ When proud St. Athans’ owns its lord,
“ And the maid hath sigh’d th’ unchanging word,
“ Then wildly burst in fulness o’er,
“ Nor know a tone of sadness more.”

He said—and to the porter turn’d,
By him that eld wight ne’er was spurn’d,
“ Bran! are my vassals true?”—
“ Aye—true are they! seek ye the plain
“ Where erst thou check’d the courser’s rein,
“ Thy name is on the yew.

- “ Yon stone that crowns the rugged hill—
“ Yon bright but lone and sheltered rill—
“ Yon groves where thou wert wont to chace
“ The squirrel from his nesting place—
“ All tell of thee as if thy name
“ Had won for them some tale of fame;
“ Thy every feat the youngsters tell
“ On mount, in glen, in grove, or dell:
“ Still do they point thy favourite bower,
“ And mourning thee in foeman’s power,
“ Sigh o’er each spot—each lov’d retreat,
“ Where the light moss bent ’neath thy feet;
“ Treading each scene thy presence blest,
“ Ere chains thy liberty repress’d.
“ Oh! ’tis remembered all,
“ E’en age hath felt awaken’d zeal,
“ And hardier wights have drawn the steel,
“ But lest injurious to thy weal,
“ In silence did it fall;
“ ’Twere vain by art their warmth to prove,
“ Stern is that zeal whose spring is love!”

“ Then speed we to the fight—but where
“ Breathes forth my mother’s lone despair!

“ Oh! let me kneel before her eye,
“ And catch one glance of tenderness,
“ Ere to the battle’s din I hie,
“ And dangers round me press;
“ So if her tongue with ardour bless,
“ I meet the foe all terrorless.
“ Love hath a glow that time may check,
“ And passion rules with angry beck,
“ And friendship fails and warmth decays
“ ’Neath flattery’s wiles and folly’s gaze.
“ The lips whose lore is constant truth
“ Are hers who smil’d upon my youth,
“ And joy’d to mark my opening power,
“ Give promise of a glad’ning hour—
“ Sigh’d o’er my cradle—calm’d the tear
“ That childhood’s frailty gave so clear—
“ Laugh’d when would flame my laughing eyes,
“ And sooth’d mine infant agonies;
“ And I have sworn that head to shield,
“ Again my ruddy glave should wield;
“ And I have vow’d of peace to know
“ Nought, till hath fell the dark death blow
“ On his, the kindred murderer’s brow.”

Scarce had he spake, when in the hall
Came forth the dame in mourning pall;
He knew her as she stately stept,
And by her dark weeds, as they swept
 Along the silent floor;
But by the eye whose fire was flown,
And by the cheek whose flush was gone,
And by the brow that mock'd the stone,
 She seem'd the dame no more;
So harrow'd rose her heaving breast,
So fraught with misery and unrest,
So little by hope's gleamings blest,
 That not a votary of heaven,
In listless cell for seasons pent,
Where o'er the cross of light is sent
A gleam, with woe and suffering blent,
 Seem'd so of joy bereaven;
So tremulous and faltering came
The accents of her Conan's name,
So still'd the light erratic flame
 That erst bedeck'd her brow:
It play'd, but 'twas a wavering beam,
Cold, listless, void of warmth, and tame,
 The mockery of the glow

That in her glance of beauty shone,
When love could bless—ere hope had flown.

“ Oh! bless me!” and she bless’d him there;
“ Ne’er may thy soul sink ’neath despair—
“ May you thrive in the battle—be joyful in peace;
“ May the faith of thy fair one for ever increase;
“ May bliss round thy bridal like the bright halo
 “ shine,
“ And the love of thy sons and thy vassals be thine;
“ The dread bolt of death be long ere its hurling;
“ Thy banner be stainless when high it is whirling;
“ Thy target unpierc’d and thy helmet unshiver’d,
“ And faint be the sabre in hostile hands quiver’d;
“ Go forth as the sea storm—be fleet as the gale,
“ ’Till thy dread foemen perish still onward pre-
 “ vail;
“ In the breasts of their leaders thy wrongs to atone
“ ’Till vengeance hath bless’d thee and won thee
 “ thine own;
“ And then may the solace of peace beam around,
“ And thy bosom with pleasures unsating be
 “ crown’d:
“ Thy glad smiles be many—thy sorrows be light,
“ Thy even of life still be steady and bright;

“ And short be the pang that shall lead thee to
“ rest,

“ The mother that bare thee!—thy mother hath
“ bless’d!”

And she sank in the arms of her damsels weak,
And the flush of her energy waned from her cheek;
A moment alone and it quick return’d,
And her face with a beam of rapture burn’d:
A stranger’s hand upheld her head—
A stranger’s foot to her aid had sped;
’Twas a seraph gently bending o’er,
And her voice was like an angel’s lore;
Mild in her soft anxiety,
When she mark’d the bright flush fly;
Gentle in hope when she saw the stain
Fleet rushing through the silken vein:
Soothing, cheering, light, and fair
Stood the lovely Una there.

“ Mother! ’tis her my love hath chose
“ To share my joy—to chace my woes;
“ Look not on the maid with angry eye,
“ ’Tis a soul of purity;

“ And while the feud soars hotly on,
“ Shield the damsel for thy son!
“ Now to the battle speed—
“ Bring the fierce and panting steed—
“ Call the brave and warlike hand
“ To mingle with my gallant band:
“ Call the heart that never quails,
“ Bring the brand that never fails,
“ And the dauntless brow that ne’er
“ Blenches at the deed of fear;
“ To the battle then we speed,
“ Where the warrior’s glittering meed
“ Shall bless the soul that never shrinks,
“ Till glaves the adverse life-blood drinks:
“ Where the eyes are glazed, that late
“ Shone as fierce defying fate;
“ And the soul enfranchised flies,
“ And the spearman struggling dies,
“ And the blazoning tongue of fame
“ Deems it victory or shame.”

One hallowed kiss he gave the maid,
Then leap’d the steed and fleetly rade,
And evening saw his shadow glide
On frowning Cardiff’s castle side;

Warily he pac'd the bower,
Watchful scan'd the grey-stone tower;
And he saw a form wend slowly by,
Aged and wan, and tremblingly,
With silver'd hair and feeble gait,
And forehead plough'd by time and fate,
Came the eld who strode the hall,
And frown'd upon the festival.
“ Oh! 'tis my father's ancient form,
“ Drooping beneath the ruthless storm,
“ Father! behold thy son!” he cried,
And the sudden tone resounding wide,
Hath burst the old man's reverie,
And call'd the tear from his lurid eye.
“ I bless thee, boy! the hour is come
“ That seals the recreant's scatheful doom;
“ Thy vassalmen are true—I gave
“ But one weak glance—it rous'd the brave!
“ They knew me spite of furrow'd brow,
“ And grasp'd the lance, and strung the bow;
“ At morn I'll give thine eye to greet
“ A sight—'twill bid thy bosom beat:
“ I'll shew thee hands that never shun,
“ And feet from foes that never run,

“ And breasts and brows alike of steel,
“ And arms that can the death blow deal,
“ My day of pride and battle o’er
“ In vain my spirit strives to soar;
“ They won my halls—they sank my fame—
“ They rule o’er all my rightful claim—
“ They feast it lordly at my board:
“ But, boy! they never gain’d my sword;
“ I knew ’twould win before I die
“ My deep revenge and victory!
“ Then be it thine nor shrink to wield
“ The dread of many a sanguine field.”

Apart they stood awhile to mark
Who lonely sought the bower so dark;
’Twas Jestyn! by his sable vest:
His hand was on his labouring breast,
His darkling eye to earth was given,
As if its scowl was shun’d by heaven;
Day shot for him too bright a beam,
And the banquet lamps too glaring gleam;
’Tis the midlight tide that guilt must claim,
It shrouds the blushful cheek of shame.
Alas! that softened hour so bland
Should shield the murderer’s baleful hand,

And waft its clouds around to shade
The deeds that man hath villain made.

That faltering foot pass'd on before,
Nor stainless shone that hand of gore:
A brow-bent front, and lip all bleach'd,
A soul where late remorse had reach'd,
And fear, and hate, and frenzy wild

Rose there—their dread abode;
And pride that saw its visions foil'd,
But durst not live to be revil'd;
And scorn that shun'd a feeling mild,
And conscience—keenest goad!

Oft had he sat beneath the bower,
And gave to soft content the hour
Ere rude ambition glar'd;

Oft now he sat him 'neath the shade,
To curse the slave its rule had made,
To curse the heart it snar'd.

Oh! on that night a deed was done
That chills the heart drops as they run;

When the shrill guard trump blew,
When summon'd to their tented post,
The crouched warriors of the host
Leap'd from the evening dew;

Dark Jestyn heard its echoes fall
As it struck upon the castle wall;
A moon-beam glinted on his crest,
Was that a pray'r to heaven address'd,
As rose the heavings of his breast—

A pray'r with hope and credence bland?
Why peers he round so anxious now,
The cold drops circle on his brow,
A dagger fills his hand?

Bitter and rude as blew the storm,
Wild as the startled spray,
And rugged as the breakers form
That gleams around the bay,
Was that lorn bosom in its hate,
Its scorn and mockery at fate;
Yet 'twas with trembling hand and heart,
And frenzied soul, he view'd the dart,
And mark'd with half-averted eye,
The weapon of his destiny.
With sudden impulse, dark and drear,
He drave it to the deed of fear;
Fast flew the night—and morning's tide
Gleam'd on the ghastly suicide!

As on the streamlet's silver swell
The seared leaf in autumn fell,
And danc'd upon the wavy flow,
Unconscious of the depths below;
So mounts so' falls the heart of pride,
So witless through life's maze 'twill glide;—
Floats on the stream of guilty praise,
Nor dreams its falsehood e'er betrays;
So like the leaf it onward wends,
Till deep corruption's taint extends—
Then sinks for aye, (unwelcome thought,)
And nought is all or worse than nought.

At morn there blew a signal shrill,
A blast that summon'd to the war;
It wound around the cloud capt hill,
Its echo flew afar;
And there was tumult, clang, and jar
Of massy mail and morion bright;
Axe, spear, lance, bow, and stellate bar
Were borne to swell the fight—
Were borne—but little deem'd the hearts
That joy'd to watch the gleaming darts,
Their's should be danger light;

Vain veer'd the eagle's droopless wing—
Vain lay the ready wolf to spring—
The raven croak'd not o'er his prize—
The hound no feast of carnage eyes—
The vulture heard the mingling din,
And deem'd the fray was to begin;
And the wood-cat judg'd his prey was there,
Mocking his own bright eye-balls flare;
But as she were by heaven taught,
The dove her easy booming brought,
Nor fled before the flashing ray,
Mild omen of a better day.

O'er the wild steep came forth a band
Of knights, the noblest in the land,
 And Conan led them on;
Full far the flashes of each spear,
And battle brands, and axes drear,
 Were by their brightness known;
Forth rides with speed the leader wight,
But not to urge the glowing fight:
 The pennon of the fair
Is in his hand—his glave is low,
Vengeance flits not athwart his brow,
 A smile is circling there.

Why did not Una hear the shout,
As the wind the silken fold blew out,
And the sun gave double glare?
Down lances sank—down glaves were thrown—
'Twas greeting gay and joy's wild tone—
'Twas rapture rude and loud;
Colwyn's brave hearts the pennon knew,
And to their vow and Una true,
They hail'd the banner proud;
And Jestyn's men beheld with joy
Again in arms the leader boy;
They thought of the day when last they met
In battle field, and they forget
How dark each summer roll'd,
Till again their hardy brows were set
In phalanx 'neath the bold.

Oh! 'twas a sight to warm the brave,
When forth outsprung each bloodless glave;
The sturdy Colwyn peaceful stood,
And thirsted not for foeman's blood;
And Conan joy'd to see the feud
Melt into peace—by peace subdued;
And then they touch'd each other's brand,
And swore their friendship long should stand;

And Colwyn gave the lovely fair,
To bless eld Rhydderch's gallant heir.
Thus Conan won his bride and land,
The gallant Chief then spoke the band :—
“ Oh! be the proud device that shines,
“ Symbol of peace amid our lines,
“ Long borne on Pembroke's shield;
“ There glittering beam for many a day,
“ For Pembroke men a pennon gay;—
“ High o'er the conflict field
“ Bright let it waft, by Cambria known,
“ Revered where'er its fold is thrown,
“ And always in the van;
“ Or o'er the feast of chieftains proud,
“ When the gladsome pledge is given aloud,
“ Fair let its glory fan,
“ Gladding the eyes of the bold and bright,
“ The maid of our love and the Chief of fight.”

“ Still there's a deed of woe to do,
“ A tale of terror known to few;
“ Within his dark and silent bower
“ Sleeps the deluded slave of power;
“ Ambition's victim—wreck of pride—
“ The hand remorse could only guide!

“ But conscience struck the dart of pain,
“ She never drives her shafts in vain,
“ The recreant felt its rankling smart,
“ The weapon sheathed it in his heart;
“ Yet still entomb him 'neath the shrine
“ Where lay the best of Rhydderch's line;
“ Awhile he shone, but dread his lot,
“ By us, oh! be his crimes forgot—
“ He wronged us, but he wrongs us not.”

Scarce sped a fleeting month tide o'er,
When the bright harp was heard to soar,
A wandering wight who pass'd the gate
Saw round the banquet table sate
Fair dames that looks of love employ,
And knights that seem'd enwrap in joy;
He listened—'twas a cheery sound
That sweetly wafted far around;
The chorus of that glistening throng
Rose like the chaunt of nuptial song;
He saw a priest, and saw a pair,
Youthful and lovely, fond and fair;
I ween it was the marriage rite,
That join'd the Chief and virgin bright,
Long be their joy—their every sorrow light.

Words to Welch Melodies.

WELCH MELODIES.

 I.

AIR—*Ar hyd-y-nôs.*

DID you mark the fisher rowing,
 Careless and light;
 How calm and fair the wave was flowing,
 Silv'ry and bright;
 How sweet the song to shore was wending,
 As to the oar the wight was bending,
 Oar and wave and cadence blending,
 The live long night.

Mark'd you from his cottage glancing
 The canwyll's light,
 To the place of tombs advancing,
 Doleful yet bright;
 Heard ye at morn the wild bird screaming,
 His dark wing o'er the green wave gleaming,
 His eye with lust of rapine beaming,
 Scowling affright.

At eve no heart had tasted sorrow,
 Calmly and light
 His lonely mate watch'd for the morrow,
 Still smiling bright;
 The morrow came in cloud and sadness,
 And that weak heart which late was gladness,
 Fail'd—and sank—its throb was madness,
 Mourning the night.

But still her infant's smile was pleasure—
 Playful and light;
 She clasp'd with hope her fragile treasure,
 Hopes once how bright.
 'Twas noon, the broken bark appearing,
 The surf his lifeless form was rearing;
 'Tis o'er—the sight her bosom searing,
 Slept death's long night.

 II.

AIR—*Codiad yr haul.*

ROUSE! to the standard hie,
 Floating bright in Corwen's vale;
 Waving proud when foes defy,
 When tyrant feet thy glens assail.
 Rouse! 'tis the voice of Glendower
 Calls thee, thy name and freedom to shield;
 Cling to the arm of chief of power,
 Croud to his banner—'tis liberty's field.

On where the foeman brave
 Pranketh high his silver steed;
 Shrink not—tho' the sabres wave
 Ready for the warrior-deed.
 Shrink not—the eye of Glendower
 Scowls on the coward—the tame of heart;
 True son of Gwynedd, in battle hour,
 Is first in the field, and last to depart.

Weepeth the maid! who bright
 Bless'd thee—gave thee targe so true?
 Consecrate that targe in fight,
 With tints thine own strong sabre drew.
 List! 'tis the bard of Glendower
 Bids thee thy fame and the fair one shield;
 Cling to the arm of the chief of power,
 'Tis love's—'tis honour's—'tis liberty's field.

 III.

AIR—*Blodew'r Gwynnydd.*

OH! they said there was wildness blaz'd forth in
 mine eye,
 Because a light beam'd there when Mary was
 nigh;
 They said that my soul to reproof was inured,
 Because that all listless their frowns I endured;
 That callous to counsel my heart was of steel,
 But they ne'er knew the bliss which this bosom
 could feel.

For never on them had there glided the beam
 Of delight, that emblazons my joy-seeking dream,
 When Cynthia to Venus deputed her throne,
 And the soft fairy lustre lights lovers alone;
 When the star of my guidance thro' Rhuddlan's
 dark shade,
 Was the glance of affection thy eye-beam
 convey'd.

Let them frown, so thou smileth, dear maid of
my heart;

Let them frown—to this bosom thy whispers
impart.

Doth the dove quit his mate when the vulture is
nigh,

Or the flow'ret the stem, but to linger and die?

Then deem not this breast hath less ardour for
thee,

But, Mary of Rhuddlan! long smile thou on me.

Let thy smile be as life, and thy glance be as light,

Together to burst thro' the world's dreary night;

The song of thy mirth, and the strain of thy lyre,

Be the spells that can bid all our sorrows retire;

While the brightest of joys to this bosom shall be

The smile—or the tear which thou sheddest for me.

IV.

AIR—*Lhwyn on.*

FAIR smileth the ocean,
When ceas'd their wild motion;
The white fringed billows are lull'd into rest,
As calm be the feeling,
Of love gently stealing,
When it silently nurstles within thy light breast.
Like the sweet strain which floated,
To pleasure devoted,
When the bright harp thou touch'd in yon ashen
bower;
Be the sigh that shall waft,
O'er thy bosom so soft,
When throned in bliss, rules the young God in
power.

Be the cares of thy bosom
As frail as the blossom
That flitteth away with the summer's light gale;
Oh! fleet may they perish,
Whilst virtue shall cherish,
And shield thee when rude gusts of envy prevail.
May the libertine's finger
Around thee ne'er linger,
To tear from thy temples pure love's hallow'd
wreath;
But the bright tongue of truth,
That could win thee in youth,
Still soften thy sorrows or mourn thee in death.

V.

AIR—*Y Cymri Dedwydd.*

WHEN Liberty her mandate spoke,
 And earth the echo hail'd,
 The druid sought his bower of oak,
 Where erst his woes he wail'd;
 Cymri! around the glad note flew,
 Thy sons had souls again,
 Their vows of freedom they renew
 Allegiance to thy reign.

Oh Liberty! 'twas life you gave,
 And glory's energy:
 It fir'd the bosoms of the brave,
 It lit the drooping eye;
 And to thy name the minstrel tone
 Of Arvon wafted shrill
 In every grove—a temple shone
 An altar on each hill.

The bard the ancient lyre he strung,
 That lyre that long had slept,
 When slav'ry chain'd his tuneful tongue,
 And bonds around him crept;
 He bade the throb of valour rise,
 Awoke the warrior's glow,
 And told how blest the hero lies,
 When crush'd his country's foe.

To Freedom's shrine a train repair,
 Bedeck'd with summer wreaths;
 Within her fane, with hymns, the fair
 Around her altar breathes;
 And as ascends the heavenly strain
 Of maiden minstrelsy;
 'Tis beauty weaves the only chain
 Can twine around the free.

 VI.

AIR—*Tros y garreg.*

WHY weep we when to earth we give
 The saint-like form we lov'd so true?—
 Why weep—because she ceas'd to live
 Where life was but a thing to rue?
 Dark sorrow wrapt that form so fair,
 With robe of every hideous hue;
 Oh! then why weep if from despair
 Her soul to realms of safety flew?

Death comes, 'tis said, with griesly hand,
 To sever every bliss we knew;
 To her he came the angel bland
 That o'er her woes the curtain drew.
 Long sear'd was memory by the blast
 That false and faithless friendship blew;
 The light of peace but beam'd at last,
 When lingering fled that lorn adieu!

So droops the dove beneath the storm,
 Her airy path of light unblest,
 Each gust creating new alarm,
 Seeks safety in her downy nest;
 Where was her refuge 'mid the stour?
 Where shelter when the rude winds press'd?
 How sweet and calm that welcom'd hour,
 She sleeps in innocence and rest.

 VII.

AIR—*Hela'r Ysgyfarnog.*



Oh! bright o'er the meadows the wild bird is
 straying,
 The morning is up—thro' the vallies we'll rove;
 But, fairest, oh why art thou so long delaying
 To meet in the meadows the youth of thy love?
 Oh! deem'st thou Llewellyn,
 Whose bosom is swelling
 With love and with passion, untainted by guile,
 Can ever betray thee;
 Thoughts never should sway thee
 That ever could steal from thee confidence' smile.

Say! was it not for thee the rough tide I
 ventur'd,
 When death stretch'd his finger to snatch thee
 from me?
 Had heart-chilling fear in this bosom but
 enter'd,
 What hope for thy lover—thy grave was the Dee?
 There clos'd from Llewellyn,
 Where the rude tide was swelling;
 Oh, deem'st thou this bosom could ever forget
 The bliss that would hover,
 When thou sang to thy lover,
 The light fairy echo seems lingering yet.

Sweet girl! in the woodlands the maybud is
 blowing,
But gazing I meet with more light in thine eye;
 Fair nature abundant its beauties bestowing,
But calls us to love, and to joys ere they fly;
 Thou lov'st thy Llewellyn,
 Yet gently rebelling,
The wile which thou playest is wantonly shewn;
 No floweret I wreathed,
 No sigh ever breathed,
But Emma! was thine love—and only thine own.

VIII.

AIR—*Serch Hudol.*



OH! stay that lone and cheerless sound,
That lyre, Æolian, cease to thrill,
Give me the note that floats around
The brow of Branna's heath-clad hill;
Oh! cease for Nature ne'er it gave
One charm on which the soul could dwell,
Her wildest music sweeps the wave,
Her sweetest—is the riv'lets swell.

She revels near the mountain spray,
Nor may you deem her numbers tame—
She soars amid the wake of day,
When light and music are the same;
At eve, in that lone lovely hour
Is all her tuneful witchery known,
When mutual bosoms mark her power,
And every sigh partakes her tone.

But if there be a glow in art,
It wantons round the Cambrian lyre,
Its chimes they weave around the heart,
In glow of pride, with minstrel fire;
That touch of art seems Nature's touch—
It wakes the fair—it nerves the free,
And I have lov'd its cadence much,
When, Mary! it was rous'd by thee!

 IX.

AIR—*Pant corlan yr wen.*

How fair, how bright, the tighten'd sail,
 When laden'd with the morning gale,
 How lovelily the vessel glides
 Above the rude and whelming tides;
 No shadow o'er her gleaming prow,
 No sorrow o'er the seaman's brow:
 She flits—she veers—a ray as bright
 As sunbeams in the goblet's light.

As on she moves, the sparkling yatch,
 She seems of life, the glowing spot
 That blazons thro' the darksome hour,
 When mortals own misfortune's power;
 She reigns above that waste of wave,
 Like beauty bending o'er the brave,
 And as we mark her canvass swell,
 'Tis—"lovely vessel, speed thee well!"

Yes! speed thee well; thy gallant crew
With joy thy seaway fleet they view;
They love to mark thy pennon flare
Above the brave—above the fair;
May skill thy helm with science guide,
When danger-wafts upon the tide,
While every heart with joy elate,
Be happiness thy only freight.

Oh! merry be the yatchers free,
When seeking pleasure on the sea,
May airs of lightness round them blow,
May waves of brightness round them flow;
And while the vessel scuds away,
As proud to bear a band so gay,
Let laughter, wit, and wine, and song
The gladness of the crew prolong.

X.

AIR—*Tuall yn ei boch.*



Pluck not the lily—so fair in the valley,
 Sylphs 'neath its shadow so wantonly dally,
 Briskly at noon round its beauty they gambol,
 Scant from its fragrance a sylph e'er would ramble.

Ne'er would they fly from a blossom so tender,
 So simple in garb, yet array'd in such splendor;
 Loveliest of field flowers—beauty entwining,
 Couch for a fay queen in langour reclining.

Pluck not the lily—whose flow'r bell encloseth
 Canopy fair where light Lilla repositeth,
 Ere buddeth the flower, the shade of the willow
 Alone can afford to the fay queen a pillow.

Pluck not the lily—that shieldeth such sweetness,
 For oh! to decay it steals on with such fleetness;
 Dawn marks its beauty—the day, but the morrow,
 It sinks, and light Lilla awakens to sorrow.

Gone is that loveliness—fall'n that fair dwelling,
 Grief in the breast of the fay queen is swelling;
 Now at the night-noon she flies from the willow,
 And couches to rest on my Emmeline's pillow.

But like the blossom her sorrow as fleeting
 Lilla's grief flies at my Emmeline's greeting,
 Dawning of joy yielding bliss at its breaking,
 How sweet is the sleep that awaiteth such waking.

 XI.

AIR—*Morva Rhuddlan.*

SLEEP, sleep, souls of heroes! the spirit that flits
 Round the shade of the cromlech but whispers
 thy fame,

And ere the dim sepulchre mournfully quits,
 Gives down to tradition the blaze of thy name;
 Sleep, sleep souls of heroes, the flattering scroll
 On the tablet where follies dark shrouded
 recline

Is worthless, unlike the bright glow of the soul,
 When the shepherd the votive stone casts to
 thy shrine.

Oh! spirit of Pardon! to thee we commend
 The rest of the valiant, the charge of their dust,
 With their lone sleep the solace of peacefulness
 blend,

With ne'erfading glory emblazon their bust;
 Alleluiah* they sang—Alleluiah the word
 Of the battle, aloud on the breeze was it given;
 Oh spirit! awake them, when high wakes the
 chord,
 The chorus of joy—Alleluiah in heaven.

* The battle word at the fight of Maes Garmon.

 XII.

AIR—*Reged.*

OH! shade of Urien! thou hast not to mourn
 That from thy bright target the raven is torn;
 Oh! shade of the valiant! waft gently to rest,
 As in life thou wert brave, so in death be thou
 blest;
 There are none sprung from thee but inherit thy
 pride,
 For the bright star of honour was Urien's guide.

Oh! shade of Urien! thou hast not to mourn!
 From thy shield of silver no raven is torn;
 That spirit that warm'd thee still floats in their
 vein,
 Unimpair'd and uncheck'd, for it ne'er hath
 known stain;
 No spot on thy scutcheon, no blot on thy name,
 The dark raven soareth still onward to fame.

Brightly the glow spread on Urien's cheek,
 When the Bard bade the Chieftain the battle to
 seek ;
 And fierce flam'd the beacon, and high rose the
 sword,
 When Urien shouted the dread battle word ;
 And dire was the frowning, and deathly the blow,
 That the brave Men of Reged consign'd to their
 foe.

Oh! shade of Urien! thou hast not to mourn,
 From the banner of Reged no crest hath been
 torn ;
 Though ages have fled since she soar'd in her
 might,
 Yet ne'er hath a pinion been wrested in fight ;
 Thy warmen were brave, and they thought of thy
 name,
 And they guarded the banner that led them to
 fame.

XIII.

AIR—*Anhaudd Ymadael.*

WHEN the butterfly skippeth from flower to flower,
And swims with delight 'mid the sweets of the
bower ;

When the linnet shall warble all blithly her strain,
Then Ellen believe I'll be with thee again.

Oh ! whether to joy, or to sorrow I come,
Think nought from my Ellen can tempt me to
roam ;

Unlike to the butterfly ne'er can I rove,
Be mine but one flow'ret—one blossom—one love.

Unlike to the linnet, sweet bird of the glade,
Whose carol of wildness pours light through the
shade ;

My lay wanders lowly, and whispers to none
But her—who can answer its echo alone.

Then fairest ! believe when the linnet shall sing—
When the butterfly roves in the bloom of the spring ;
When the violet shall glow on the green of the
plain,

Then Ellen my Fair ! I'll be with thee again.

XIV

AIR—*Triban Gwyr Morgannwg.*

FLEET o'er the bark the breezes blew,
 And swift above the wave she flew,
 And darkness clung around her mast,
 And horror triumph'd in the blast ;—
 One heart alone had never quail'd—
 One cheek alone had never paled ;
 Though all but him had learn'd to weep,
 He spurn'd the terrors of the deep.

Oh! how that vessel drove away,
 Like twilight cloud at breaking day ;
 But ah! unlike the vapours flight,
 Her course was screen'd by haggard night :
 No star was in the welkin high—
 No consort lantern beaming high,
 Save the cold sea flash on the wave,
 'Twas dark—as some lone pilgrim's grave.

“ For home we steer !” the Sea Boy cried,
 And strove a heart of fear to hide—
 “ For home we steer !” with joyance rung
 The accent from the leader’s tongue :
 Far to the East—the light I view,
 Oh ! Emma—angel—thou art true ;
 And Hope and Love, above the foam,
 Shall bear me o’er to Thee and Home.

What is that ship where billows rage ?
 But Man in Life’s dark pilgrimage ;—
 And what the wave ? but that dread world,
 That aye on Man hath sorrow hurl’d :—
 And what the light that cheer’d her way
 Amid the storm—amid dismay,
 But that bright eye—whose glow can prove
 Man’s constant pharos—Woman’s Love !

 XV.

AIR—*Calenig*.

Is there not in yon tulip a bloom that may fade
 As fleet as the violets that breathe in the shade?
 Can you deem the gay wreaths of the garden
 more pure
 Than the wild rose, whose sweets scent the vale
 and moor?

And may not the thorn blossom vie with the best?
 And shines not the lily as bright on the breast?
 As guilty the kingcup, the foxglove as fair
 As the garden gauds flaunting their rays to the air.

So believe in yon cottage enclos'd in the dell,
 A full gem of beauty retir'd may dwell;
 As witchful a form as a palace hath grac'd—
 As sparkling an eye, and a bosom as chaste.

Oh! there is—round my heart is the feeling
 entwin'd—

I saw—and my senses their empire resign'd:
 The light bloom of innocence floats on the spray,
 Love's rose with it mingles—oh! ne'er to decay.

XVI.

AIR—*Y Stuffed.*

CAN'ST thou think I'll forget as thou wanest to age,
Every blissful young hope which our bosoms
possess'd ;

When love, and love only our griefs could assuage,
And solac'd each care and each sorrow to rest.

Can'st thou think I'll forget every playful young
smile,

That witchingly swam o'er thy cheek of delight ;
Each sinless attraction—each heart winning wile
That defied every blast of stern envy to blight.

Oh! long will I think on the soul-trancing kiss,
When first 'twas my fate to be severed from thee ;
Oh! thy blush was my joy—and thy tear was
my bliss,

And the sweets of thy lip they were manna to me.

And can'st thou believe that while youth lingers
here,

And the charm still is fresh that first won me to
love ;

I can fly from thy bosom and cease to revere,
And wantonly bid a fond passion to rove.

No! turn to this bosom, and cease thee to weep,
Still deem me my heart beats as ardent and true
As when hid in the shade of the wild roses deep,
We sigh'd forth in tears our first rending adieu!

POEMS.

POEMS.

WHEN THE TWILIGHT SHADOWS O'ER US.

WHEN the twilight shadows o'er us,
And the misty moon is flown,
And the thin rack flits before us
On the rock path rude and lone;
When the snow flake round us drifteth,
And the mountain breeze bath brast,
'Tis sweet to tread 'neath the cotter's shed,
To shield us from the blast.

When the world's wild censure flieth
Around our stricken name;
And hope and solace dieth,
And envy dims our fame;
When friends in falseness shrinketh
From souls that feel oppress'd,
'Tis bliss to meet the raptur'd beat
Of woman's sheltering breast.

To find her arms enfold us,
 So tender and so true;
To mark her eye behold us,
 Bright deck'd with pity's dew;
Last—loveliest of creation!
 When hope is on the wane,
Renew thy wile—we'll deem the smile
 Of heaven is shed again.

THE SUN LEAVES THE MOUNTAIN.

THE sun leaves the mountain,
It sinks 'neath the wave—
It flits from the fountain,
It flies from the grave:
So hope speeds away,
From the lover unblest;
He welcomes no ray,
No light on his breast,
No peace on his pillow, no calm in his rest.

The sun bursts at morning,
It breaks on the hill,
It flasheth o'er ocean,
It blazons the rill:
So anguish will fade,
Like night from the stream;
When th' eye of the maid
Consenting shall beam,
Hope lights on the lover, joy rules in his
dream.

OH! LINGER YET YE HOURS OF JOY.

Oh! linger yet ye hours of joy,
 Too sweet to fly so soon;
 'Tis harsh such moments to destroy,
 When rising to their noon.
 And thou! of life the brightest boon
 That manhood ever met,
 Sweet woman's smile, until the moon,
 Oh! linger—linger yet.

Oh! linger yet, thou sweetest smile
 That manhood ever met;
 And tho' thou art but woman's wile,
 Oh! linger—linger yet.

Oh! linger yet, while yet 'tis bliss,
 Nor glide so swift away;
 Life's sunny halo sure is this,
 With love and hope to stray,
 And court the wile that bids us stay
 In fancy's witchful net;
 Sweet woman's smile, until the day,
 Oh! linger—linger yet.

Oh! linger yet, &c.

OH! WEEP FOR THE SOULS THAT IN
PALESTINE SLEEP.

THEY have seized on their armour, have grasped
their sword,
Have spurn'd the delays of the bower and board,
Have reined the courser that swept thro' the
mead;
Like the wind in its gush, like the falcon in speed,
Left the smiles of their love to be changed to the
sigh,
And have sped on to Palestine, heroes to die.

Oh! weep for the souls that in Palestine sleep,
Ye maidens of Meirion—sorrow and weep;
When the red-handed Saxon the sabre shall raise,
When thy fields shall be havoc, thy bowers a blaze,
When the tyrant shall taunt thee, and term thee
but slaves,
Thou wilt envy the fallen, their fame, and their
graves.

Tho' they sleep in the land which the Crescent
profan'd,
Where the red blood of martyrs the desert dust
stain'd;

Tho' their tombs are unhallow'd by the tears of
 the maid,
 Tho' no laurel e'er cast o'er their cold bed its
 shade;
 Yet their names and their vows flash on memory's
 eye,
 Like the holiest light from the morn star on high.

And deep be your woe, oh ye fathers! and mourn,
 For the spirits you cherish'd shall never return;
 And revenge is not yours! for the foe is afar,
 And vain would your hoary heads mingle in war;
 Then weep for your sons that in Palestine sleep,
 And your woe like the still'd wave be silent and
 deep.

THE END.

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